



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 6

1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200

DALLAS, TEXAS 75202 - 2733

OCT 27 2017

Joseph Ranson, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Louisiana Ecological Services
646 Cajundome Blvd., Suite 400
Lafayette, LA 70506

Dear Mr. Ranson:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 6 would like to request the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Louisiana Ecological Services' review of the enclosed biological evaluation (BE) for the referenced water quality standards provision. The EPA is submitting this request pursuant to the EPA - USFWS Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for enhanced coordination and regulations at 50 CFR § 402.13.

The State of Louisiana has adopted revised water quality standards for dissolved oxygen (DO) in the eastern Lower Mississippi River Alluvial Plain (eLMRAP) ecoregion. The seasonal DO criterion adopted for waters in the eLMRAP ecoregion is: **2.3 mg/L - March through November.**

The original DO criterion of 5.0 mg/L for fresh waters and 4.0 mg/L for estuarine waters remains in effect for the months of December through February. The EPA has determined that Louisiana's new and revised water quality standards are consistent with the Clean Water Act and 40 CFR Part 131. The enclosed BE only includes determinations for these revised standards.

The BE focused on the listed species that have the potential to be affected by fluctuations in DO levels within the water column. These species include the Atlantic sturgeon (Gulf subspecies) (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*) (=oxyrhynchus desotoi), the Pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) and the Alabama (=inflated) heelsplitter (*Potamilus inflatus*). The EPA has determined that its action on these revised standards may affect, but will not likely adversely affect the aquatic species or critical habitats within the specific action area described in the enclosed BE.

In accordance with the MOA, EPA requests that the USFWS respond in writing within 30 days of receipt of this letter, unless extended by mutual agreement, indicating whether the USFWS concurs or does not concur. If the USFWS does not concur, EPA requests that a written explanation be provided which includes the species and/or habitat of concern, the perceived adverse effects, supporting information, and a basic rationale.

If you have questions concerning this request, please give me a call at (214) 665-7101. If your staff has questions on the enclosed BE, please have them contact Russell Nelson at (214) 665-6646 or nelson.russell@cpa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'WK Honker', is written over the typed name.

William K. Honker, P.E.

Director

Water Division

Enclosures: October 2017 Biological Evaluation

cc: Monica Sikes
Endangered Species Coordinator